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Summer program prepares students with disabilities for college

MOBILE – School is out, but some Mobile County students are already back in school.

A group of high school graduates with disabilities is participating in a two-week workshop on college life to prepare them for post-secondary education.

The program, called College Prep, is sponsored by the Vocational Rehabilitation Service (VRS) division of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) and is being held at the University of South Alabama from June 15 to June 26.

"This program provides students with a real-life college experience," said Becky Fields, ADRS ' College Prep program director for the Mobile area. "It will help them with transitioning from high school to college and will help them to adjust to the changing responsibilities that they will experience in becoming more independent during their first year of college."

Through College Prep, the 35 students are learning a range of skills to prepare them for a technical school, two-year college or four-year university. They are being taught note-taking skills, time management, organizational skills, and self-advocacy as well as how to register for class, get the accommodations they need, and talk to professors.

In high school, students with disabilities have a program to address their particular needs. In college, however, young people have to be able to get what they need on their own, Fields said.

In addition to the sessions, participants in College Prep also develop relationships with each other.

"It always amazes them that there are other students dealing with the same issues they are dealing with," Fields said. "They learn from each other."

The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services is the state agency whose mission is to enable Alabama's children and adults with disabilities to achieve their maximum potential.